

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Pollster: America undergoing upheavals

Compiled by Art Toalston
Baptist Press

DALLAS (BP) — Evangelical pollster George Barna in his 1996 book, "The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators," provides statistical evidence that:

"... religion at the end of the millennium is experiencing upheavals of gargantuan proportions.

"Yet, in the midst of the information explosion and a media that meddles in every arena of endeavor known to humankind, surprisingly little is known about the true nature of the

shifts that are redirecting the religious frontier in America.

Among the statistics cited by Barna:

◆ Two out of every three adults say they have made a "personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today."

◆ Most Americans believe that spiritual salvation is an outcome to be earned through their good character or behavior, compared to evangelical Christianity's traditional view of salvation by grace.

◆ The proportion of adults who read the Bible during the course of a week, other than

when they are in church services, has declined dramatically since the early nineties. In

1992, nearly half of all adults (47%) read from the Bible during the week. That figure has

plummeted to just 31% by 1995.

◆ Attendance at evangelical churches has slowed after a period of growth in the '70s and '80s.

The average adult attendance at these churches is currently 101 adults.

In church membership, 60% of adults belong to a local religious institution, compared to 80% during the 1950's.

Weekly church attendance, however, remains at 42%.

Adult Sunday school attendance, meanwhile, is on the decline.

One out of four adults (23%) attended such classes in 1991. The proportion has dipped to one out of six (17%) in 1995.

◆ Increasing numbers of churches are striving to be sensitive to the needs of "seekers" — individuals who are not Christians but are seeking spiritual moorings and connections.

Like it or not, Barna writes: "The religious climate in America these days reflects the true soul of the population: one which thirsts for experience rather than knowledge, for exposure rather than understanding, for choices rather than the simplicity and security of a limited set of alternatives."

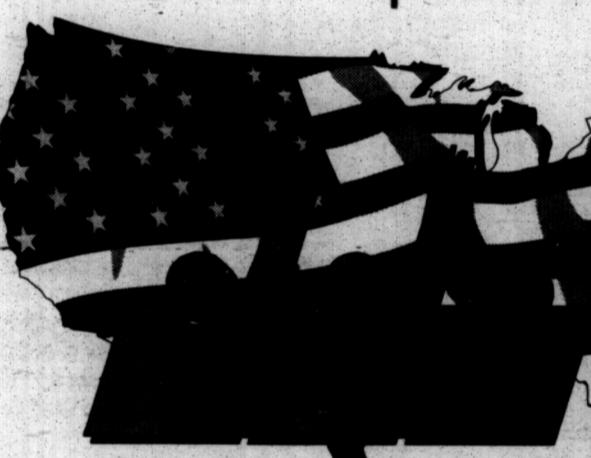
Barna also writes: "Americans want their religious freedom and they cherish their religious life, in all of its unique forms."

"Religion in this country may not be what it used to be, but indisputably it remains a vital dimension of the American experience."

RELIGION IN AMERICA

- ◆ 67% of adults say they have made a "personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today," a slight increase in the past decade.
- ◆ 57% believe "if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven."
- ◆ 20% claim the Bible is the dominant influence when they make ethical or moral decisions.
- ◆ 73% believe the miracles described in the Bible really happened.
- ◆ 74% believe that "forgiveness of sins is possible only through faith in Jesus Christ."
- ◆ 63% has no idea to what "John 3:16" refers.
- ◆ 10% of adults believe that the name of Noah's wife was Joan of Arc.
- ◆ 82% incorrectly believe that the Bible includes the statement that "God helps those who help themselves."
- ◆ 60% of adults belong to a local religious institution, compared to 80% during the 1950s.
- ◆ 42% of adults attend church weekly.
- ◆ 17% of adults attended Sunday School weekly classes in 1995, compared to 23% in 1991.
- ◆ Women are twice as likely as men to attend a church service during any given week.
- ◆ 49% of all pastors contend their family life has suffered significantly as a result of the pressures and demands of their ministry.
- ◆ 89% of pastors say they feel satisfied with their ministry.
- ◆ 58% of adults believe that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil."
- ◆ 36% of adults read their horoscope, a % roughly equal among Protestants, Catholics and non-Christians.
- ◆ 22% of churches have "seeker-sensitive" services.
- ◆ 79% believe that Protestants and Catholics should put aside their religious differences and work together.

Source: "The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators," by George Barna



WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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TMB offers Web page

As a mid-February

meeting, the

Mississippi

Baptist Convention

announced

the creation

of a new

Web site

at www.tmb.org.

MS-2ers

10 years ago

Harry Vickery, head of The Mississippi Mission, reports \$22,808,739 has been pledged in the \$40 million unified endowment campaign for Mississippi College, William Carey College, Blue Mountain College, and the Baptist Children's Village.

20 years ago

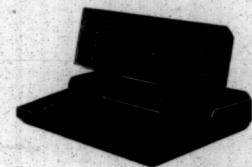
Corrie Mitchell James of Taylor knew William Faulkner before he became famous. She also knew "The Baptist Record" in its earlier years. Jones, 79, a member of Taylor Church, says she's had "The Baptist Record" in her home as long as she can remember.

50 years ago

Mighty, militant, missionary Mississippi Baptists march into First Church, Jackson, to prove "things are done in Mississippi as in no other place on earth," said New Orleans Seminary President Roland Q. Leavell at the statewide missions rally.

Looking back

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Postmaster: Send changes of address to **The BAPTIST RECORD**, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Send news, communication, and address changes to **The Editor, BAPTIST RECORD**, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530 (601) 968-3800

VOLUME 121 NUMBER 1
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$8.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers.

God's plan for rescuing 'hopeless' children

The happy and energetic elementary students bounded into class after an active recess time. Since it was the week after Father's Day, the teacher decided to allow the students to describe to the class how they spent the special day with their dads.

Child after child recounted delightful scenarios filled with presents and Dad's favorite food and an abundance of reciprocated love.

Then the teacher came to Johnny (not his real name). He calmly stood up, dropped his pants, and "mooned" the class.

Those happy Father's Day stories were more than he could take. He lashed out in the only way he knew, because Johnny doesn't have a dad.

Johnny doesn't have a mother. Johnny doesn't have anyone.

Elizabeth (not her real name) has been betrayed by everyone she ever trusted in her young life.

Sexually abused by her father and passed around for the pleasure of her drug-addicted mother's many boyfriends, Elizabeth has no concept of her self-worth.

These are Mississippi children — not residents of some far-away, blighted urban area from which we can emotionally detach. These are our children.

Mindful of Christ's oft-expressed love for the little ones (Matt. 19:14, Mark 9:37), Mississippi Baptists have for 100 years provided a place for Johnny and Elizabeth to come to know the unconditional love of the Heavenly Father, where they knew no love before.

The Baptist Children's Village (BCV) is that place.

Over the past several weeks, "The Baptist Record" has published testimonies of former BCV residents who found refuge there and are now living independent, productive lives as Christian adults in a society deeply in need of such role models.

Unfortunately, the rescue and protection of such "hopeless" children are not priorities in our culture — to say the least.

According to the February 1997 issue of the American Family Association "Journal," a local affiliate of Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the U.S., recently placed the following ad (excerpted):

"Babies are loud, smelly, and expensive. Unless you want one. We exist to make sure babies are born planned and wanted."

Needless to point out, Christians know that is not God's way of dealing with one of life's little "inconveniences."

His way is to work through his people for the betterment of his ultimate creation and not its destruction.

The BCV is one of the important ways he has chosen to do that. There's a century of history as proof.

In honor of the centennial of the Baptist Children's Village, the state's Baptist churches have been asked to prayerfully consider supporting the Village for one day in 1997 — a cost of \$7,500.

To multiply the faithfulness of Mississippi's churches, God has raised up a prominent Mississippi businessman who has promised to match the amount raised — if all 365 days of the year are subscribed. It's difficult to relate what such a gift



could do for our BCV children. Now is the time to pray and seek God's direction for you and your church regarding this momentous project.

For more information or to request a pledge card, contact Chrystelle Thames, BCV public relations director, at (601) 922-2242.

God has used Mississippi Baptists for 100 years to accomplish miracles in the lives of BCV children, who now literally span the globe with Christ in their hearts.

It's no mistake God chose us more than century ago for this vital Kingdom task.

He already knew how committed we would be to placing these helpless children in his protective bosom.

GUEST OPINION:

Race relations is a Christian matter

By Paul G. Jones II, executive director
Mississippi Baptist
Christian Action Commission

Jesus." (Gal. 3:28 KJV)

Many in our churches have apparently forgotten the song we learned as children:

"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world."

God created every human being as a person of worth and dignity.

Yet since the early days of the church, there have been those who would attempt to find scriptural support for racial separation and selective evangelism based upon human theological systems that provide man with the right to pronounce certain persons, groups, or races outside God's plan in Christ.

We must examine our own mind, heart, and lifestyle to see how afflicted we are with the sickness of prejudice.

Many of us have come to the conclusion of W. A. Criswell, retired longtime pastor of First Church, Dallas, who after long soul-searching stated: "I came to the profound conclusion that to separate by coercion the body of Christ on the basis of skin pigmentation was unthinkable, unchristian, and unacceptable to God."

The church must take a stand. We must reject attempts to incorrectly interpret portions of Scripture to legitimate separation and deny salvation because of race.

We must live as brothers and sisters toward all our Christian sisters and brothers.

We must move from rhetoric to concrete action in our homes, schools, businesses, and — surely — in our churches.

If the church is not the place of reconciliation and uncompromising evangelism of all men and women, then what is its purpose?

On Race Relations Sunday, who will be worshipping with you in your church?

'Ye are all one in Christ Jesus'
(Galatians 3:28b)



Observe Race Relations Sunday
February 9, 1997

Sponsored by the Christian Action Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention

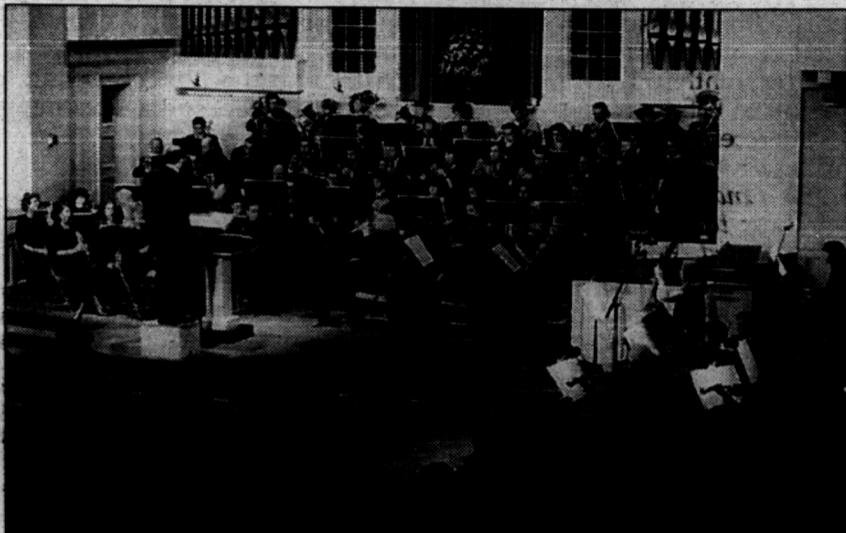
Orchestra's premiere makes beautiful music

By Tim Nicholas
MBCB Communications Director

The Mississippi Baptist Symphony Orchestra made its debut to rave reviews Jan. 27 during the 1996 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference

at Broadmoor Church, Jackson. The audience, consisting mainly of pastors from across the state, gave the group a standing ovation.

"They absolutely filled the auditorium with praise," said one audience member.



DEBUT PERFORMANCE — The 84-piece Mississippi Baptist Symphony Orchestra conducted its first performance at the Jan. 27 session of the 1997 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

Not bad for an 84-piece collection of mostly volunteer Baptist laypeople who practiced together only once before their premiere performance.

A total of 14 Mississippi Baptist churches were represented in the orchestra, which included three ministers of music and a few professional musicians.

The orchestra was directed by Bruce Zeiger of New Orleans, retired trumpet soloist for the U.S. Air Force Band who now serves on the music staff of Calvary Church, New Orleans.

Orchestra members ranged from Heather Armstrong, a ninth grader and member of Broadmoor Church, Jackson, to Don Hickman of Colonial Heights Church, Jackson, who has been playing in church orchestras for 63 years.

Musical arrangements performed at the conference included "The Doxology," "Victory in Jesus," "I Sing the Mighty Power of God," and "Holy, Holy, Holy."

Graham Smith, director of the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention

Board (MBCB), said members of the orchestra have agreed to perform two to four times per year.

The next major performance currently scheduled is the Jan. 19, 1998, evening session of the next Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson.

Billed as "A Gift of Celebration: A Gift to God and to the People," the orchestra will accompany a 1,000-voice choir performing the Christian musical, "God With Us."

For more information, contact the MBCB Church Music Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE



PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

FEBRUARY 6, 1997

VOL. 121

NO. 1

Evangelism Conference provides lists

By Tim Nicholas
MBCB Communications Director

The 1997 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference on Jan. 27-28 at Broadmoor Church, Jackson, was a conference of lists — ranging from what the secular world wants to know about Christians, to what can be expected of a church member, to the types of "heart diseases" that keep people from a relationship with the Lord.

Herb Brisbane, director of black evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) in Atlanta, listed questions the

secular world wants to know about Christians: Do you care, and do they count?

Brisbane pointed out that if they can be convinced the answer to both questions is "yes," they will consider the gospel message.

Steve Stroope, pastor of Lake Point Church, Rockwall, Tex., which has a contemporary approach to worship, offered a list of requirements for membership at Lake Pointe Church.

He said every new member must enroll in Sunday School, must give financially, must find a place of service within a year, and must pray for and invite at

least three prospects to church.

Stroope explained that if people don't want to commit, they were welcome to remain visitors.

Jim Futral, host pastor of the annual conference sponsored by the Evangelism Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), spoke on spiritual "heart disease" just after Kermit McGregor, pastor of First Church, Meadhall, gave his testimony on receiving a heart transplant.

Futral said the Bible is a manual about the heart.

If a person allows God to make the examination, God might find an ailing heart, a blocked heart, a cold heart, or a depressed heart, Futral said, pointing out that some people need a transplant.

"This is what Jesus came into the world for, to change hearts, and some (people) might need renewed, reunited, or unjammed hearts," he said.

Paul Powell, head of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, spoke on the traditional approach to church growth.

He said it takes a personal commitment by the pastor, development of a growth mentality, initiation of some new programs, hard work, and the ability to "think missions."

Don Wilton, pastor of First Church, Spartanburg, S.C., said the greatest program of outreach and church growth "is just to love each other."

The conference's closing speaker was Adolph Coors IV, a member of the Colorado beer-brewing family who left the company after becoming a Christian.

Coors said an automobile accident convinced him he was

too materialistic, and he walked out on his wife shortly after a Coors company vice-president implored him to put his faith in Jesus Christ.

His wife accepted Christ while they were separated, Coors said, thanks to a televised Billy Graham crusade, and the family was reunited shortly after he also accepted Christ at a revival meeting.

The 1998 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference will take



place Jan. 19 at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson, and Jan. 20 at Alta Woods Church, Jackson.

For more information on evangelism activities, contact S. A. "Sonny" Adkins, director of the MBCB Evangelism Department, at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

Associate Editor Carl M. White also contributed to this article.

CHURCHMEN SING — Members of the Mississippi Singing Churchmen prepare to perform Jan. 28 at the 1996 Mississippi Baptist Evangelism Conference at Broadmoor Church, Jackson. The popular group of Baptist vocalists has performed around the world. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

TOP 10 CHURCHES IN BAPTISMS		
CHURCH NAME	PASTOR	BAPTISMS
Trinity Church, Southaven	Jim Butler	314
Colonial Hills Church, Southaven	Steve Bennett	174
Park Place Church, Brandon	Bobby Williamson	171
Crossgates Church, Brandon	Barry Clingan	161
Temple Church, Hattiesburg	Dean Register	142
Four Mile Creek Church, Pascagoula	Tommy Brill	134
Hilliard Church, Laurel	Dennis W. Sewell	133
First Church, Jackson	Frank Pollard	114
Northcrest Church, Meridian	Malcolm Lewis	114
First Church, Olive Branch	P.J. Scott	110

TOP 10 CHURCHES IN BAPTISMS (based on ratio of members to baptisms)		
CHURCH NAME	PASTOR	RATIO
Faith Memorial, Poplarville	Stuart Shelton	2.39
Antioch, Carthage		2.77
Hills Chapel, Booneville	Jerry Mitchell	3.20
Johnson Creek, State Line	William J. Harris	3.25
Delary Road, Water Valley	Donald Miller	3.40
Four Mile Creek, Pascagoula	Tommy Brill	5.67
Northside, Hattiesburg	Dean Perkins	3.70
Davis Road, Terry	Ricky Summers	3.97
W. Carthage Mission, Carthage	Jack Nazary	4.21
Pineview, Houston	Terry Rhodes	4.44

Source: MBCB Evangelism Dept.

'Typical' Miss. church fares well in SBC

How do Mississippi Baptist churches measure up against sister churches across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)?

In a nutshell, the typical Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) church is older, smaller, and much more generous in supporting missions.

Mississippi churches are also well above SBC churches in the categories of Discipleship Training, Brotherhood involvement, and are right on target with Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) participation.

The typical Southern Baptist church has 233 total members,

of whom 168 are resident members. The typical Mississippi church has 207 members and 150 resident members.

The current pastor has been at the church three to four years — the same at both SBC and Mississippi levels.

The SBC church has 70 people in its Sunday morning worship service; reported five baptisms and five other additions during the 1994-95 church year; has 98 enrolled in Sunday School, with 55 in attendance; and gives almost \$7,500 to missions.

MBC churches have slightly lower worship attendance, baptisms, and Sunday School enrollment and attendance, but missions giving is considerably higher than the SBC figures.

The profiles were derived by Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) researchers from information supplied by more than 36,500 churches through the 1995 Annual Church Profile, according to Phil Jones, HMB research director.

"It is a picture of what I have called the 'typical' SBC church, which is a compilation of the median statistics of all the reporting churches.

"That means half of all SBC churches are larger and half are smaller on any particular statistic," Jones explained.

The information indicates the current status of SBC churches as well as trends, he said.

"While large, growing churches receive a great deal of attention, the SBC continues to be composed primarily of small churches," Jones summarized. "Seventy percent of SBC churches have 400 or fewer members, and less than 10% have more than 900 members."

Jones also found that although most churches are small, 70% of Southern Baptists are members of larger churches.

The study also shows some growth indicators of the typical SBC church in 1995 may be smaller than the typical church 10 or 20 years ago, but Jones said reasons for declines are difficult to pinpoint.

"There were some problems with data collection the past couple of years causing some churches to not report, although I don't believe that would dramatically affect the outcomes," Jones said.

"Some declines in the baptism rate, Sunday School enrollment and attendance, and WMU enrollment appear to be due to declines in older established churches," he said.

Jones explained not all declines are negative.

"The decrease in the median number of resident members is not really an unfavorable trend since the decline is due to the influx of new, smaller churches into the convention.

"In fact, the baptism rate would have declined even further if not for the starting of new churches in the convention."

The study showed substantial increases in church receipts; however, the increases were smaller when adjusted for inflation.

"The income for the typical SBC church in 1995 would purchase just 14% more than in 1972," Jones said.

Total mission giving fared even better over time, reflecting what Jones called the "missions mindedness of the typical SBC church."

Although the typical church has experienced some decline, statistics for the entire SBC continue to increase.

The total number of members reported by SBC churches has grown 34% since 1970, a time when most major Protestant denominations experienced serious declines.

Combined income of SBC churches grew 200% between 1978 and 1995, to \$5.6 billion.

When adjusted for inflation, the growth in purchasing power still increased 29%. Missions giving over the same period grew 170%.

"Of course, we are interested in this trending data which indicates some declines at the local church level," said Ernest J. Kelley, HMB interim president.

"However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the SBC is very healthy and continues to grow despite strong trends to the contrary by other denominations," Kelley pointed out.

Original article authored by HMB writer Martin King.

1995 Median Profile

	SBC	MBC
Total members	233	207
Net change total members	1	0
% change total members	.6%	0%
Resident members	168	150
A.M. worship attendance	70	68
Baptisms	5	4
Baptism rate per 100 members	2.5	2.2
Year organized	1928	1905
Other additions	5	5
Year pastor came	1992	1992
Sunday School enrollment	98	85
Average weekly S.S. attendance	55	51
Discipleship Training enrollment	15	37
WMU enrollment	13	13
Brotherhood enrollment	2	10
Music enrollment	26	29
Total receipts	\$61,646	\$60,265
Tithes and offerings	\$59,160	\$59,611
Undesignated gifts	\$50,787	\$51,756
Designated gifts	\$6,171	\$5,892
Total local expenditures	\$46,024	\$44,677
Total mission expenditures	\$7,477	\$8,318
Cooperative Program (CP)	\$2,935	\$3,406
Association missions gifts	\$1,200	\$1,322
Annie Armstrong Offering	\$350	\$410
Lottie Moon Offering	\$561	\$839
% Undesignated gifts to CP	7%	7.9%
% Undesignated gifts to assoc.	2.4%	2.5%

Source: Home Mission Board Research Dept.
Compiled from 1995 Annual Church Profiles

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Happy 100th birthday...

Miss. Baptists help answer child's prayer

By Ronnie Foster
Former Village resident

I will never forget the sermon about a "new home" that I heard at the age of 10 in a Pelahatchie church.

The pastor said, "All you have to do is come down this aisle and accept Jesus. You can have a new home."

I sure wanted a new home.

I was the youngest of three sons. There was constant arguing and fighting in our home.

We were constantly being dropped off at one relative or another. We would stay for a couple of weeks and then move on to another relative.

When my family did have a place to stay, it was only for a month because we had no money for rent.

What money our Dad made, he spent it on liquor. He would come home drunk, and the fighting would begin.

It was really rough in the winter. Most of the time, we had no gas or electricity. My brothers and I awakened many nights with the sheets frozen on our bed.

My parents were separated many times. They even divorced and remarried.

It was in Hope, Ark., that our mother packed everything she could and left with us while Dad was at work. I was 10



THE FOSTERS — daughter Sandra (left), son David (standing), Linda (front) and Ronnie.

years old, and my brothers were 12 years old.

We went back to Pelahatchie, but our mother decided to leave for California.

I really don't remember how long we were by ourselves. I believe it was about three weeks before our Dad showed up.

In January 1961, he placed us in the Baptist Children's Village

on Woodrow Wilson Avenue in Jackson.

My brothers were put in the senior boys cottage, and I was put in the primary boys cottage.

Everyone I loved had been torn away from me. I remember thinking, "No! This is not the new home I had in mind!"

I guess I cried myself to sleep for two years.

I was in the tenth grade before I accepted the Village as my new home.

It was at the Village that I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

It was at the Village that I learned about the true "new home" I had wished for as a boy of 10.

I am now 46 years old. When my wife Linda talks about "going home," I know she means French Camp, Miss.

When I talk about "going home," she knows I mean the Baptist Children's Village.

God took the worst time of my life and made it my best. I lost my father and mother, but the Lord gave me a much larger family.

God used every house par-

ent and child at the Village to fill the void in my life. I want all of them to know how much I love them.

You might say I'm partial, but I believe the Baptist Children's Village is the greatest home mission field there is.

Thank you, Lord, for my family.

Thank you, Lord, for the good Baptists who support the Village.

Thank you, Lord, for the "new home" you gave me, and for the one you are preparing for me in eternity.

For related editorial, please turn to page two of this issue.

Rankin set to speak at rally

Jerry A. Rankin, president, Foreign Mission Board, will be the keynote speaker for the Rankin County Association's Fif-

teenth Annual Missions Rally and banquet at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 2 at First Church, Brandon.

Rankin

Displays will be open at 5:30 p.m. Banquet cost is \$2 per person, and reservations are required by Feb. 13. Childcare reservations are also required for birth-preschool ages. For additional information and to make reservations, call Rankin Association at (601) 939-2182 or Lorise Creek, associational WMU director at (601) 825-6821.

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One award will be given for VIDEO (broadcast or non-broadcast) and one award for RADIO in each category in each division. One award only for Best First Time Entry.

1. BEST PROGRAM

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- C. COMMUNITY SERVICE (i.e., human interest, sports, and others)

2. BEST SPOT

3. BEST FIRST TIME ENTRY

Division I

People using VHS Camcorders or other consumer/industrial-grade equipment in production as well as volunteers or small budget projects.

Division II

People using S-VHS, 3/4-inch SP, BetaCam and other broadcast type equipment. Also have a professional in charge or outside production house. (This also applies to radio stations or other professional sound productions.)

Entries must be received by 4:45 p.m. on February 24, 1997.

For further information and an entry form, please contact the office of Broadcast Services, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205 or call 601/968-3800 in Jackson, or toll free 800/748-1651.

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Tour HL57 HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE. June 9 (Opt. extn. to Europe - Switzerland, Germany (Rhine Cruise), Austria, France and Belgium.)

Tour EU31 BEST OF EUROPE. 8 Days. Germany (Rhine Cruise) Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, and France. June 15.

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TLI R HZB OMGL
BLO, ZNLMU GCLHV
GCZG ZIV JLIM LT
DLNVM GCVIV RH
MLG Z UIVZGVI
KILKCVG GCZM YLCM
GCV JZKGRHG: JOG
CV GCZG RH SVZHG
RM GCV FRMUWLN
LT ULW RH UIVZGVI
GCZM CV.

SOFV HVEVM:
GDVMGB-VRUCG

Clue: B equals Y.

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Malachi Two Ten



MISTAKEN FOR JESUS — Retired Missionary Margaret Fairburn, who was once thought to be Jesus by an Ivory Coast youngster, chats with GAs and their leader. From left are Candy Cobb, 11; Sheryl Hickerson; Fairburn; and Nikki Brasher, 7. The group is from Ackerman Church, Ackerman. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

Conservatives to stay in BGCT — for now

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) — Members of a conservative Baptist group in Texas polled about forming a new convention said they plan to stay within the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT), at least through the state convention's annual meeting this fall.

After last fall's meeting of the state convention, which was dominated by moderates, 350 members of Southern Baptists of Texas (SBT) were asked if they preferred a new convention for conservatives or to stay aligned with the BGCT. The "overriding response" to the poll was to remain a part of the state convention, Ronnie Yarber, the group's executive director, told about 25 members at a recent meeting in Fort Worth.

"Our intention is to stay as

we are" for now, Yarber said, adding there could be a "stepping away" from the state convention in the future.

Presently, Southern Baptists of Texas charge the moderate-controlled BGCT, with 2.5 million members, is seeking to distance itself from the 16 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, which is currently run by conservatives.

Rather than severing ties and forming a separate state convention, as conservatives in Virginia did last fall, the Texas group hopes to bolster its influence in the state by electing conservatives to officer posts.

Last year, a slate of candidates backed by the group lost to moderates.

It is uncertain if last year's conservative standard-bearer, Rick Scarborough, will run for

the convention's presidency again this year.

Scarborough, pastor of First Church, Pearland, is resting after an aggressive campaign last fall and has not decided if he will be a nominee in 1997, said SBT leader Miles Seaborn.

"We're letting the dust settle after a monumental, all-out effort," said Seaborn, pastor of Birchman Church in Fort Worth.

Seaborn and Yarber also told the group that the state convention's administrative committee has refused to include monies designated to SBT in the "Cooperative Program" budget — the state's primary missions account.

The committee based its

decision on the argument that the conservative group is "political" in nature, Seaborn and Yarber said.

They insisted the group is a missions organization, however, noting SBT has supported two church starts, a mission project in Brazil, seminary students, and a church damaged by fire.

While churches may direct funds to either the SBT or the moderate Texas Baptists Committee, neither qualifies for the "Cooperative Program" designation, said BGCT treasurer Roger Hall.

The administrative committee views both organizations as being primarily political — not missionary — groups, Hall said.

Blue Mountain hosts GA/Acteen activities

By Tim Nicholas
MBCB Communications Director

A three-year-old child in Ivory Coast, Africa, for a long time believed that Missionary Margaret Fairburn was Jesus,

retirement and currently serves as dorm and cafeteria hostess at Baptist-affiliated Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, said she could understand the child's confusion.

The child, known as "Baby Boy," always got to ride with Fairburn when she visited the village where the parents lived.

She knew the boy had never called her by name but hadn't thought too much about it.

Arriving later than usual one afternoon, the child ran into the place where the church group was to meet saying, "Oh, Jesus, are you here?"

The mother explained that each week, she had told the boy that "We're going to learn about Jesus."

Fairburn said that she had to explain who she actually was to the boy.

However, said Fairburn, in her 33 years, she started 35 churches, and although Jesus was not her name, "I had the privilege of representing Him."

"I pray God will lead you to find your place of service."

Fairburn told 317 GAs and Acteens at a rally at Blue Mountain College last Saturday.

Fairburn, who took early

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Evangelists' Profile

This space is dedicated to Mississippi men and women who have committed themselves to vocational evangelism. Churches are encouraged to take advantage of their talents in helping to reap the harvest.



This week's evangelist

Danny Lanier
Little Rock, Miss.

Years in ministry: 20

Education: Clarke College, Southern Baptist School for Biblical Studies, Covington Theological Seminary

Places of service: revivals around the continental United States

Focal ministry: Preaching and soloist

Personal: Married to Janet Denise Lyle; two children, Justin and Micah

Address/telephone:

Danny Lanier
14323 Chunky-Duffee Road
Little Rock, MS 39337
(601) 986-8757

For more information or to be included in this space, contact Jimmy Knight, president, Conference of Methodist Baptist Evangelists, 25 Melody Lane, Laurel, MS 38440.

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MENTORS NEEDED

Editor:

The Youth Challenge Program (YCP) at Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg, is an opportunity for high school dropouts between ages 16-18 to get a new lease on life.

Through this five-month program the teenagers earn their GED, are taught self-discipline, participate in community service projects, and because of the grateful consideration of the staff and leaders of YCP, are given the choice to attend religious worship services and Bible studies.

The average attendance is 240 students per five month session. Obviously, where there are that many teenagers Satan is on the prowl.

Students as well as staff members face spiritual, physical, and emotional battles every day.

So what can you do for the students who attend the Youth Challenge Program?

Christian mentors are needed. Responsibilities include making disciples of the Christian students, finding students a church in which to become active, loving them, teaching them morals and good character, and spending time with them each week.

Churches need to become involved in teaching Bible studies and volunteering for church services at Camp Shelby as well as discovering the teens in your area who have participated in the YCP and getting them involved in your church.

The cadets and staff need your daily prayers in a big way. Can you commit yourself or your church to praying for the

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To become involved or if you have any questions, contact Chris Thomas, 2917 Oak Grove Road, Hattiesburg MS 39402. Telephone: (601) 264-9937.

Chris Thomas
Hattiesburg

REMEMBER WHEN...

Editor:

Did you ever ride in a wagon to a protracting (revival) meeting, or walked along a trail through the woods every night for a two-week meeting to hear that evangelist that we had looked forward for weeks to come to our little country church?

Do you remember the "amen corner"? I remember seeing those men on their knees during the invitation as someone played the old pump organ and they sang from the old Sacred Harp books. No one stood to pray in those days.

The night I was saved, which was the last Friday night of September, 1925, they sang "Pass Me Not Oh Gentle Savior" and "Why Do You Wait Dear Brother?"

Often the revival would be set for one week, but things were happening and there was no way that those of that day would let it stop when they knew the Spirit was moving.

Friends, it's protracting meeting time. Let's stop telling the Spirit. Let's let the Spirit speak to us in an unusual way.

Are you hungry for that? I am.

It will not come easy. It will take prayer — a lot of prayer from a lot of people.

When Solomon finished praying, the house was so full of the Holy Ghost that there was not room for the priest to enter.

It can happen here in America. There is no other way to turn America around.

History has recorded some great Awakenings. It is past time for America to wake up.

Tom Walden
Jackson

PK INCLUDES EVERYONE

Editor,

Taking into consideration all the things Mr. Blanton wrote in his (Jan. 16) letter to the editor, I feel a need to ask: What are the fundamentals to which he is referring?

If anyone knows anything about Promise Keepers (PK), they know the PK statement of faith is the fundamentals.

As for the mixing of religions, everyone knows religion is man-made. If a man from a Mormon or Catholic denomination comes to any PK event, he either leaves a Christian, or with the seed planted to become a Christian, or he goes back to the life he was living and never returns to another PK event.

If the Apostles had believed they could not preach the Gospel to unbelievers, there would not be any believers today. The Gospel of Christ would have died at Calvary along with Jesus.

Before Jesus left the world, he told his disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature; whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he who does not believe is damned (Mark 16:15-16).

I believe it is our responsibility as Christians to preach the Gospel to whoever comes to a PK event and not leave out anyone.

If we as Christians cannot reach out to a dying world, our Savior is dead already. I for one cannot and do not believe he is.

James Jones
Kosciusko

GET VINEYARD FACTS

Editor:

We are writing regarding comments made by Bennett Blanton of Houston in the Jan. 16 issue of "The Baptist Record."

Mr. Blanton stated that there were some serious doctrinal errors in the Vineyard churches. We think it is wrong to make such a public statement without backing it up with fact. If people do not have access to Vineyard beliefs, they have no way to judge whether what you say is correct or not.

We have members of our family who are members of the

association of Vineyard churches and we have read their Statement of Faith and would like to know what part of it you consider to be in error? We think you owe that to the readers of "The Baptist Record."

Mr. and Mrs. Lov Cotham
Tupelo

BLESSED BY JONES

Editor:

I write today to say that I deeply appreciate, trust, admire, respect, and love Paul Jones, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission.

I have found him to be a Christian in feeling toward others and in action.

I have observed his balance of mercy and morals, ethics and evangelism, compassion and courage, wisdom and humility, and fairness and faithfulness to the cause of Christ.

I was blessed to learn that he was pro-life before Roe v. Wade, January 22, 1973.

He has spoken in our association to a large group and to a small group.

I am so thankful that we are blessed with a man of his caliber and character.

Although no one is perfect, and flattery helps no one, in my heart and from my observation of this Christian brother and servant of our Lord, I wanted to write this letter of affirmation concerning our own Paul Jones.

Grady Crowell
Director of Missions
Clarke Association, Quitman



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (While church membership is not required, Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

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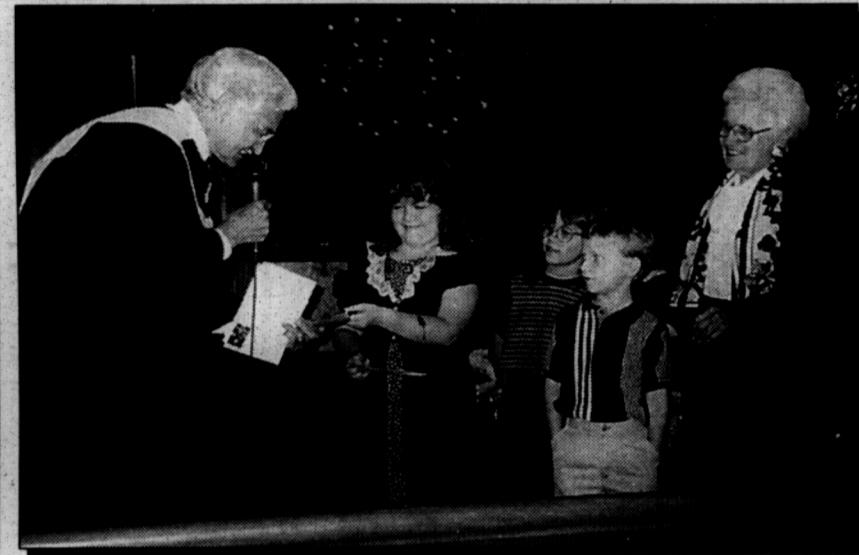
Clarke College Alumni gave \$2,315 to Lottie Moon. W. L. Compere (pictured), past president of the former Clarke College (CC), lights the last bulb of the Lottie Moon star which hung during the month of December in front of the CC Alumni Center in Newton. The goal set was \$650, the same as the first Lottie Moon goal ever used at CC.

Robinhood Church, Brandon, surpassed its Lottie

West Gulfport Church, Gulf Coast Association, surpassed its goal for 1996 Lottie Moon Offering. The goal was \$500, and the church collected \$523. Grady J. Ross is pastor.

Robinhood Church, Brandon, surpassed its Lottie

Moon Offering goal, giving the largest offering in the church's history. The church also voted to enter into a building program. The plans are to build a sanctuary to seat 300. The present sanctuary will be converted into educational space. Don Nerren is pastor.



First through third grade Sunday School class of Southside Church, Greenville, converted their pennies into \$25 for the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. Pictured (from left) are Fred Marshall, chairman of deacons; Annie Beth Mallard; Alicia Jones; Alan Burns; and Kathleen Tharp, teacher. Earl Ezell is pastor.



Wellman Church, Lincoln Association, youth (pictured) collected pennies for the Lottie Moon Offering and raised over \$950. "So pennies really do count," said Jim Everett, pastor.



The children of Crowder Church, Crowder, made Lottie Moon banks during Sunday School on Nov. 3. They returned the banks on Victory Day for Lottie Moon, Dec. 8. The children collected \$700. Pictured, row 1, are Tyler Bolen, Austin Brasel, Dancy Kate Bailey, Randa Elmore, Jenna Elmore, Jordan Bailey; row 2, Kathleen Snyder, David McNutt, Devin Griffith, Brooke Bolen, Kayla Dancy, Tiffany Wiggs, Heather Wiggs, Mary Jennifer Meurier; row 3, Nathan Dancy, Ty Austin, Amanda Bolen, Jenny Southerland, and Becky McNutt.

NAMES IN THE NEWS

Terry Road Church, Jackson, set a goal of \$2,650 for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The amount received was \$2,785. Henry J. Bennett is pastor.

GAs of Calvary Church, Lawrence Association, recently held an Art Sale for Lottie Moon and raised \$230 by selling their own original drawings, and contributed over four lawns bags full of adult and children's coats to the Lawrence County Outreach Ministry.

Richard J. Shropshire has opened The Barnabas Center, Inc., a Christian counseling service, in D'Iberville. He comes out of a background of 20 years in pastoral ministry, during which time counseling was an important emphasis. Shropshire is available for conferences, revivals, and marriage

enrichment events. He can be contacted at (601) 392-2608.



Burton

Leola Burton was recently recognized at Hopewell Church, Newton Association, for fifty-plus years of service as church treasurer. Burton is pictured receiving a plaque and certificate from her successor, Tammy Fitzgerald.



Little Bahala Church, Lincoln Association, recently elected three new deacons. **Jerry Ables, Bill Dungan, and Alfred Smith**. An ordination service for Ables and Dungan was held on Jan. 12. Smith has been a deacon for 37 years. Talmadge Smith, director of missions for Lincoln Association, gave the ordination sermon. Pictured (from left) are Talmadge Smith, Alfred Smith, Ables, Dungan, and Wayne Gray, pastor.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI is receiving resumes for the position of Day Care Director. Please mail resumes to Weekday Education Committee, 800 Van Buren Avenue, Oxford, MS 38655 by Friday, February 14, 1997.

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PART-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH. If interested send

resume to: New Zion Baptist Church, 12011 New Zion Rd, Crystal Springs, MS 39059. Phone: 601-892-1246.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. If interested send resume to: New Zion Baptist Church, 12011 New Zion Rd, Crystal Springs, MS 39059. Phone: 601-892-1246.

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH of Eureka, Missouri is prayerfully accepting resumes until March 15, 1997 for a dynamic, full-time Youth/Music Minister to serve in a rapidly growing community. Send resumes to Central Baptist Church, PO Box 66, Eureka, MO 63025, Attn: Search Committee.

BAPTISTRY/BATHTUB REPAIR. Porcelain or fiberglass. No job too large or small. Statewide service. No mileage charge. K&K Bathtub Repair, 1526 Gardner Blvd., Columbus, MS 39702; 1-800-349-2882.

GROWING CHURCH SEEKS FULL TIME YOUTH/EDUCATION MINISTER. Send resume to Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 1791 Lake Lowndes Road, Columbus, MS 39702.

MINISTER NEEDED: FULL TIME MUSIC/YOUTH MINISTER. Send resume to Mr. Roy Moore, Woodland Park Baptist Church, PO BOX 847, HAMMOND, LA 70404.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED by growing church, located in Central Mississippi. Send resume to East Philadelphia Baptist Church, PO Box 304, Philadelphia, MS 39350.

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH SOUTHAVEN, MISSISSIPPI, a suburb of Memphis, TN, is seeking a full-time Minister of Assimilation and Evangelism. Send resume to Dr. Jim Butler, Trinity Baptist Church, 7200 Swinnea, Southaven, MS 38671.

TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH, SOUTHAVEN, MISSISSIPPI, a suburb of Memphis, TN is seeking a full-time Preschool Minister. Send resume to Dr. Jim Butler, Trinity Baptist Church, 7200 Swinnea, Southaven, MS 38671.

WANTED: FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC AND YOUTH. First Baptist Church Collins, MS (601) 765-6279.

SMALL LINY CONGREGATION searching for full-time/bivocational Pastor. College and seminary required. Age 35 and older with strong Bible based preaching, outreach background, and administrative skills. Send resume to: Trinity Baptist Church, (Attn: Pastoral Search Comm.), 1368 William Floyd Pkwy, Shirley, N.Y. 11967.

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YOUTH GROUPS NEEDED FOR SUMMER MISSIONS: For information, cities, dates, costs call 1-800-299-0385, Youth on Mission, Box 2095, Rocky Mount, NC 27802.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

West Gulfport Church, Gulf Coast Association, celebrated its Golden Anniversary on Jan. 19. The church was organized in 1947 by E. S. Flint. The church, with a regular attendance of 15-20, has had nine pastors in 50 years of service. Of the 40 persons present there were five members with the following years of attendance: one at 48 years, one at 47 years, two at 44 years, and one at 30 years. Al Mosley, former pastor, delivered the morning and afternoon messages. A special

offering of \$310 was received. Grady J. Ross is the pastor.

Terry Road Church, Jackson, has kept up to date training records and emphasized both study courses and records. The church, at the end of 1996, received the following record from the Sunday School Board, Nashville: total persons in CSC file, 176; persons active last 12 months, 53; course credit records since Oct. 1, 1995, 99; diplomas issued since Oct. 1, 1996, 17; and



Highland Church, Crystal Springs, recently held a Mission Friends Recognition Service. Pictured (from left, back row) are Justin McManus, Neil Whittington, Cassie Kees, Jennifer Turner, Lyndsey Rials, Lauren Thornton; (front row) Dustin Whittington, Nicholas Whittington, Deanna Lee, Kyle McGee, and Megan Wade.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

The Winters School of Music at William Carey College will hold auditions for 1997-98 scholarship positions Feb. 8 from 1-4 p.m. in Thomas Fine Arts Center. Prospective students are encouraged to audition for scholarships in voice, instrumental music, piano, organ, and guitar. For more information, call Milfred Valentine at (601) 582-6175.

Ninety-six area students recently took part in the Creativity Write-Down Workshop hosted by the William Carey College Center for Creative Scholars (CCS) on the Hattiesburg campus. "This program gives 2nd through 12th grade students a chance to sample a smorgasbord of experiences in art, music, and literature, giving them a taste for the long program offered in the summer," said Trudy Abel, administrative director of CCS. The Creativity Exploration, a week long program held in July, allows students to explore, evaluate, and further develop their creative talents through poetry, writing, art, and photography. For more information, call (601) 582-6191 or 582-6205.

The Center for Creative Scholars at William Carey College will host the "Teacher Exchange," an innovative program designed for teachers of gifted children on Feb. 22 from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. on campus. This

program is designed to offer teachers of gifted children a resource where they can learn a variety of teaching techniques and obtain information from their peers. This program is partially funded by the Hattiesburg Zoo, which became involved after the success of last year's exchange. For more information, call (601) 582-6191 or 582-6205.

The City of Hattiesburg Concert Band will perform March 2, 3 p.m., in the Saenger Theatre, Hattiesburg. The band is under the direction of David Young, professor of music and director of the instrumental program at William Carey College.

William Carey College Speech and Debate Team (Forensics) competed in the McNeese/Southwestern Louisiana Swing Competition in Lake Charles recently. The Crusader team, under the direction of Tom Huebner, placed first at the McNeese tournament in the overall sweepstakes category. Receiving first place awards were Jon Celoria, Smithdale; Leanne Burris, Diamondhead; and Rebecca Dockens, Gulfport. The next competition will be at the Mississippi Intercollegiate Forensics Championships at the Itawamba Community College, Fulton.

persons enrolled in diploma plan, 17. Henry J. Bennett, pastor, was one of the first to receive under the new plan, Christian Growth plan, a Diploma, for completion of the courses of study, and General Church Leadership Sunday School.

Tylertown Church, Tylertown, offers hope through a prayer line. Anyone needing prayer can phone (601) 876-HOPE and a "prayer warrior" will pray with you and for you at Tylertown Church. Mary Nell Alford was appointed as prayer coordinator.

Steele Church, Forest, will host The Southern Plainsmen of Hornbeck, La., Feb. 8, at 7 p.m.

Baptists and the Civil War will be the theme of a premiere conference hosted by the Southern Baptist Historical Society June 5-7 in Richmond, Va. The meeting offers participants tours of significant Civil War collections and sites as well as a look at the theological and social impact of the Civil War on the Baptist denomination. Persons interested in receiving registration forms or needing more information should call 1-800-966-BAPT (2278).



GAs and Mission Friends

Lake Harbor Church, Rankin Association, recently held its Coronation for GAs and Mission Friends. Pictured (from left) are Paul Lester; Joy Rachel, director; Amy Soley; and Victoria Soley. James Edwards is pastor.

Pearl River Association Deacon-Wives Meeting was held at Lee Conference Center on Jan. 14. Twenty-two churches were represented, consisting of 215 deacons and wives and pastors and wives. Matt Buckles, consultant, Pastoral Ministries, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, was the featured speaker. Ken Rhodes is director of missions.



Highland Church, Crystal Springs, recently held an Acteen Recognition Service. Pictured (from left, back row) are Maria Turner and Sharon Sims; (center row) Jessica Greer and Misty McManus; (front row) Crystal Brewer and Kasey Nations.

STAFF CHANGES

Michael McVay has accepted the position of minister of education at First Church, Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., effective Jan. 5. He previously served First Church, Pontotoc. Other churches served in Mississippi were Midway, Meridian; Green's Creek, Petal; and Lexie, Tylertown.



Burrell

First Church, Durant, has announced the retirement of Margaret Burrell, church secretary for 19 years, effective Jan. 31. Burrell served under five pastors.

A reception was held in her honor on Feb. 2.

Lena Church, Lena, has called Michael Smith as minister of youth. Smith is a graduate of Mississippi College. He previously served Immanuel Church, Pearl. Tom Stevens is pastor.

Charles Tyler, pastor of Fellowship Church, Lorman, for 25 years, has resigned effective Feb. 2. He also pastored churches in Leake, Lee, Panola/Quitman, Rankin, Scott, and Warren associations. Tyler is available for speaking engagements, interim, and supply work.

Gene Fant Sr. resigned after 22 years as pastor of Ivy Memorial Church, Hampton,

Va. Fant is a graduate of William Carey College and New Orleans Seminary. He is engaged in a full-time ministry of Bible conferences and revivals. Fant may be contacted at P.O. Box 7414, Hampton, VA 23666 or call (757) 851-5013.

First Church, Crystal Springs, honored its pastor, Joel E. Haire, and his wife Mary, Sunday, Jan. 19, with a reception. He retired from the pastorate after serving First Church for 16 years. They will continue to make their home in Crystal Springs. Other pastores have



Haire

included Pleasant Grove Church, Grenada County; Duncan Hill Church; Thompson Church; First Church, Ridgeland; First Church, Water Valley; and First Church, West Point. Haire also served as a consultant in the Stewardship Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

REVIVAL DATES

Morrison Heights, Clinton: Feb. 9-12; Building Successful Relationships; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 12 noon luncheon and 7 p.m.; Charles Lowery, Albuquerque, N.M., speaker.

Magnolia Church, Laurel: Feb. 28-March 2; Fri. and Sat., 7 p.m.; Sunday, 10:30 a.m.; Clyde Little, Bay Springs, evangelist; Billy Crosby, Houston, Texas., music; Danny Bullock, pastor.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

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Acts 6:8-11; 7:1-60

By Mary Ellen Powell

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Active Faith (Acts 6: 8-10). Stephen was full of God's grace and power. This brought about obvious fruit in his life. In the face of opposition, his fullness of God's grace and power showed as he answered his critics with wisdom and fullness of the Spirit. They saw by his actions and words what was in his heart. We should be challenged to examine what our actions and words say about our relationship with Christ.

From Stephen's ministry we

can also learn that devotion to God often brings opposition. In John 17:14, Jesus said, "I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world." The believer living for Christ is opposed by the world because he is not part of it. Not only is the believer not part of the world, he lives in opposition to it. In John 15 Jesus tells us we do not belong to the world, and in John 16 He says we can expect troubles. If Christ himself, being God, experienced opposition, we, as His people, can expect the same.

Dangerous Opposition



Powell

(6:11-15). Stephen lived so above reproach that the Jewish leaders had to "trump up" charges to find fault with him. Their lies enraged the people and Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin—in fact, before Caiaphas, the high priest, just as Jesus had been. It is interesting that Stephen did not argue down their bogus witnesses or their charges—that was not his job. His job was to wait on God to give him the opportunity to speak. Often, we attempt to win the battles before God leads the charge, but not Stephen. Even in his silence, God spoke loud and clear. When they looked at him "they saw that his face was like the face of an angel." I don't know about you, but adversity never brings people to angelic conclusions about my character. This

verse, however, clearly shows that it is obvious, even in silence, when a life is fully devoted to God.

Bold Witness (7:1-53). We can not fully discuss the longest sermon in Acts in just a few words, but we can see that Stephen's words are from God. Stephen gave a brutally honest overview of Jewish history and the unfaithfulness of the people. There was no doubt in Stephen's mind as he preached this sermon that it would lead to his death, but he did not falter. A sign of a fully devoted life is one that follows God regardless of the cost.

Victorious Rejection (7:54-58). Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit as he paid the ultimate price for his devotion to God and as he received the ultimate reward. We see that though Stephen was hated by the world, he was honored by God when he saw God's glory

and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father—what a reward! Stephen's life showed that one devoted fully to God receives great reward from the Father, but will encounter opposition from the world.

Forgiving Spirit (7:59-60). Stephen's story could have ended there, but it does not. As he was dying, Stephen, like Christ, called out for the forgiveness of his murderers. Even in death, Stephen showed us that a life fully devoted to God is characterized by attitudes and actions of God; these attitudes and actions touch the lives of others.

Let us all strive to be people who are fully devoted to God and, thus, people who are full of power, grace, and the Holy Spirit. And, like Stephen, let us strive to bear obvious fruit for Christ and touch the lives of those around us.

Powell is a member of First Church, Clinton.

LIFE AND WORK

Forgive!

Matthew 18:21-35

By Thad Moore

Most of us would probably prefer revenge over forgiveness. We would rather get even than offer mercy to those who have wronged us. The world has a popular saying, "Don't get mad, get even." Jesus reverses the world's view and teaches us to forgive.

Are there limits to forgiveness: (21-22). In verse twenty-one Peter asks an insightful question. How many times am I to forgive? Peter thinks up to seven times would be sufficient. Jesus responds by saying we are to forgive up to seventy times seven if necessary.

Jesus is not limiting the number of times we should forgive. Rather he uses exaggeration to

make a point. Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. Therefore seven times seventy is an unlimited number of times we should forgive a person who genuinely repents.

Jesus is teaching Peter and us not to keep track of the times we forgive. Love does not keep an account of wrongs. Christians are to replace retribution with the unlimited forgiveness of Christ. We forgive as many times as a person asks for it, if they turn from their wickedness.

Everyone likes to be forgiven: (23-27). In verse twenty three Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like the parable he uses. The parable Jesus uses



Moore

tells about a king who is owed a large sum of money by a servant. The servant is unable to pay. He falls on his knees and begs for pity. The king has pity on him and cancels the debt. I am certain the servant felt an enormous sense of relief.

In God's kingdom we are to offer forgiveness. The world may offer revenge, but we offer mercy. Believers exchange forgiveness for wrong deeds done to them. Jesus never said it was easy, yet if we are in his kingdom, we are to forgive.

Most of us enjoy being forgiven. As a matter of fact, we crave forgiveness. There are few feelings better than that of enjoying forgiveness. If we have received mercy, God expects us to be merciful.

Not everyone is Forgiving: (28-30). The second scene of the parable unfolds. The servant finds a fellow servant who

owes him. Unfortunately, he is not willing to forgive the debt. Instead, he is harsh and cruel. You would think he would treat others with kindness, since he had received mercy.

The first servant's actions are despicable. In light of the disparity of the debt he should have been more lenient. Even though the second servant pleads for mercy none is given.

We can learn from the servant's sin. Since we are forgiven, we are to forgive. We stand in relation to God as a debtor. God chooses to forgive us. His forgiveness becomes our basis for hope. It expresses itself in our willingness to forgive others. After all, our brother's sin against us is paltry when compared to our sin against God.

What are the consequences of not forgiving: (31-35). The king finds out about the first servant's harshness. He brings the servant in and has him tortured. There are always extreme consequences to an

unforgiving spirit. In the servant's case the consequences were torture and estrangement from his master. In our case the consequences may be bitterness, loneliness, or lack of positive relationships with others. According to Jesus in verse thirty-five if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.

God is full of compassion and mercy for all. Therefore, he does not accept anyone who will not share his grace. An unforgiving spirit is a sure sign that an individual does not know what it means to be forgiven by God.

Two faithful church members were at odds with each other. They parted ways. Finally one wrote to his friend and asked forgiveness for any wrong doing. His wise friend responded with these words: forgiven, forgotten, forever. May that be our treatment of others.

Moore is pastor, First Church, Holly Springs.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Living for the King

Matthew 22:23

By Mark Long

After Jesus' royal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus retired to Bethany for the night. This allowed the religious leaders to get their heads together for the second day. This is obvious from the coalition of Chief Priests and Pharisees (21:23,45), and the Pharisees and Herodians (22:15).

Despite their best efforts, Jesus' adversaries had been unable to entrap him up to this point. During this last week of Jesus' life, his enemies among the Jewish leadership exerted tremendous effort to trap him. In Matthew 22 Jesus' adversaries questioned him concerning the relationship of God's people to the state government,



Long

and Jesus' understanding of the Law. In both areas Jesus showed the supremacy of God, and that the focus of one's life should be to live for God.

Responsibilities to God and Government (22:15-21). After the Chief Priests and Pharisees failed to trap Jesus, the Pharisees and Herodians teamed to entangle him.

The question seemed innocent on the surface. However, Jesus knew the intent was to trap him. The Pharisees were offended by the denarius tribute Rome required. The image of the emperor on the coin violated the second commandment against idolatry. The coin

also ascribed divine status to Caesar. The Herodians, however, thought the tax and Roman rule valid, and had powerful political connections with the local king, Herod.

Jesus revealed a radical way of determining value in the Kingdom of God. "Who's icon is this, and who's inscription?" (v. 20) Ownership is determined by likeness.

We all carry pictures of those dear to us. Others know the ones in the pictures hold our hearts. When I was a little boy my mom used to write my name in my clothes with permanent marker so others would know those were my clothes, and they wouldn't get lost. Jesus used the same principle.

The obvious answer was that Caesar's image and inscription were on the coin, so it must belong to Caesar. The

Jews should not begrudge giving to Caesar what was his.

The real hard hitting part came next. Give to God what is God's. We say, "My money is God's!" Really? Doesn't it say Federal Reserve Note? "My possessions belong to God!" Really? Do they resemble God?

We can dedicate possessions to God, but the Bible states one thing in the image of God. Outside of Jesus, the perfect image of the Father, mankind is made in the image of God. God wants us, not our things. What is the icon of and on our lives? Money, status, things, or God?

The fact is, "where your treasure is, your heart is." What you treasure will eventually own you.

Responsibilities to God and Neighbors (22:35-40). An expert of the Law decided to test Jesus to see if he would say some of the Law was more important than other parts of the Law. The question seemed

innocent on the surface, but the Pharisee's own depravity is evidenced in the question—God can be pleased by mere performance.

Jesus, as usual, went to the heart of the Law. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 which follows the Ten Commandments, and points back to them. In truly loving God one will keep God's commands. However, keeping commands does not guarantee love for God. Jesus added a second command of equal value, total love for your neighbor. God loves the world. His people are to do no less.

Jesus said all the Law and the prophets hang off these two laws. Like grapes hanging from the vine, all God's laws hang from total love for him and others. Grapes cannot grow without a vine, neither can one hope to obey God without consuming love.

Long is pastor, First Church, Perkinston.

Honor Roll of Churches

Each January we evaluate the cash gifts received in Village offices during the previous 12 months. In this evaluation it has become customary to list Mississippi Baptist churches in descending order of designated cash gifts. This does not include no-cash gift items that many churches contribute. This evaluation and analysis has become known as the "Honor Roll of Churches."

RANK	CHURCH NAME, CITY	1996 GIFTS
1	First Baptist Church, McComb	16978.61
2	Morrison Heights Baptist Church, Clinton	13206.55
3	Rolling Creek Baptist Church, Quitman	12355.33
4	Russell Baptist Church, Meridian	10670.00
5	Hillcrest Baptist Church, Jackson	10510.08
6	First Baptist Church, Richton	10025.34
7	Forest Baptist Church, Forest	8835.00
8	Rienzi Baptist Church, Rienzi	8794.22
9	Park Place Baptist Church, Brandon	8575.46
10	First Baptist Church, Jackson	7876.00
11	First Baptist Church, Corinth	7529.29
12	First Baptist Church, Gulfport	7362.15
13	Williamsville Baptist Church, Kosciusko	7191.00
14	First Baptist Church, Louisville	7117.21
15	First Baptist Church, Brookhaven	7030.00
16	Ackerman Baptist Church, Ackerman	7026.50
17	Bunker Hill Baptist Church, Columbia	6877.53
18	Indian Springs Baptist Church, Petal	6804.00
19	Sylavarena Baptist Church, Raleigh	6786.73
20	Harmony Baptist Church, Crystal Spgs	6657.20
21	Midway Baptist Church, Meridian	6550.00
22	First Baptist Church, New Albany	6508.25
23	Raymond Baptist Church, Raymond	6450.00
24	First Baptist Church, Booneville	6437.04
25	Liberty Baptist Church, Liberty	6285.36
26	First Baptist Church, Batesville	6022.00
27	First Baptist Church, Greenville	5753.26
28	Van Winkle Baptist Church, Jackson	5649.02
29	First Baptist Church, Waynesboro	5586.09
30	First Baptist Church, Quitman	5557.60
31	First Baptist Church, Columbia	5490.28
32	Riverside Baptist Church, Monticello	5386.79
33	Calvary Baptist Church, Waynesboro	5374.70
34	First Baptist Church, Kosciusko	5249.50
35	Leaf River Baptist Church, Collins	5185.00
36	Highland Baptist Church, Vicksburg	5136.06
37	Parkway Baptist Church, Clinton	5001.00
38	Mount Zion Baptist Church-Tate, Independence	4999.92
39	Briar Hill Baptist Church, Florence	4950.00
40	Ingomar Baptist Church, New Albany	4903.12
41	Colonial Heights Baptist Church, Jackson	4856.00
42	First Baptist Church, Brandon	4834.57
43	Society Hill Baptist Church, Oak Vale	4753.77
44	Immanuel Baptist Church, Vicksburg	4616.32
45	First Baptist Church, Crystal Spgs	4595.07
46	Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Holly Springs	4567.72
47	Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Newton	4538.27
48	Meadville Baptist Church, Meadville	4463.00
49	First Baptist Church, Coldwater	4297.00
50	Gaston Baptist Church, Booneville	4221.82
51	First Baptist Church, Starkville	4220.77
52	Wildwood Baptist Church, Clinton	4212.35
53	First Baptist Church, Sardis	4202.27
54	First Baptist Church, Ripley	4195.31
55	State Boulevard Baptist Church, Meridian	4176.53
56	Calvary Baptist Church, Jackson	4115.00
57	First Baptist Church, Belzoni	4080.65
58	First Baptist Church, Summit	4029.05
59	Seminary Baptist Church, Seminary	3972.50
60	Sand Hill Baptist Church, Richton	3931.00
61	Liberty Baptist Church, New Albany	3853.50
62	Mount Zion Baptist Church, Columbus	3666.48
63	Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Brookhaven	3595.00
64	Fairview Baptist Church, Columbus	3576.16
65	Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian	3474.29
66	North Greenwood Baptist Church, Greenwood	3436.55
67	First Baptist Church, Hazlehurst	3382.00
68	Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Mc Carley	3370.00
69	Dry Creek Baptist Church, Mendenhall	3329.99
70	North Winona Baptist Church, Winona	3312.80
71	Oak Grove Baptist Church, Mendenhall	3311.13
72	Crowder Baptist Church, Crowder	3221.05
73	Hollandale Baptist Church, Hollandale	3180.00
74	Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Columbus	3112.70
75	Providence Baptist Church, Cleveland	3106.74
76	First Baptist Church, Vancleave	3100.00
77	Holcomb Baptist Church, Holcomb	3087.24
78	First Baptist Church, Winona	3048.78
79	Elliston Baptist Church, Blue Springs	3016.35
80	Northwest Baptist Association, Hernando	3000.00
81	Macedonia Baptist Church, Myrtle	2978.30
82	Alexander Memorial Baptist Church, Hollandale	2923.59
83	Old Silver Creek Baptist Church, Silver Creek	2903.12
84	Springfield Baptist Church, Morton	2885.00
85	Calvary Baptist Church, Greenwood	2882.91
86	Central Baptist Church, Mc Comb	2880.14
87	First Baptist Church, Union	2851.00
88	Oak Forest Baptist Church, Jackson	2813.46
89	First Baptist Church, Belmont	2807.00
90	First Baptist Church, Isola	2781.69
91	First Baptist Church, Indianola	2762.38
92	Shiloh Baptist Church, Big Creek	2728.75
93	Big Creek Baptist Church, Big Creek	2728.35
94	Parkway Baptist Church, Kosciusko	2682.65
95	First Baptist Church, Eupora	2664.96
96	Vaiden Baptist Church, Vaiden	2658.02
97	Trinity First Baptist Church, Waynesboro	2647.64
98	First Baptist Church, Clinton	2645.52
99	Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto	2637.90
100	Beulah Baptist Church, Bolton	2601.01
101	Ruleville Baptist Church, Ruleville	2594.43
102	First Baptist Church, Newton	2578.18
103	Emmanuel Baptist Church, Grenada	2575.45
104	East Philadelphia Baptist Church, Philadelphia	2562.46
105	Walthall Baptist Church, Walthall	2559.66
106	Hurricane Creek Baptist Church, Sandy Hook	2554.59
107	First Baptist Church, Hattiesburg	2550.00
108	Navilla Baptist Church, Mc Comb	2548.84
109	Ingram Baptist Church, Baldwyn	2537.65
110	DeKalb Baptist Church, De Kalb	2527.00
111	Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, New Albany	2524.39
112	Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Bruce	2500.00
113	Pine Forest Baptist Church, Collinsville	2500.00
114	First Baptist Church, Mendenhall	2499.60

THE VILLAGE VIEW

The Baptist Children's Village



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive Director
P.O. Box 27,
Clinton, MS 39060-0027
(601) 922-2242

ACCREDITED

COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION OF
SERVICES FOR FAMILIES AND
CHILDREN INC.

115	Indian Springs Baptist Church, Laurel	2495.37	231	Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Mendenhall	1453.96
116	Topeka Baptist Church, Jayess	2494.86	232	Union Baptist Church, Corinth	1445.00
117	Bethlehem Baptist Church, Pinola	2485.09	233	Old Pearl Valley Baptist Church, Philadelphia	1443.75
118	First Baptist Church, Itta Bena	2483.42	234	Union Baptist Church, Meridian	1441.00
119	Shiloh Baptist Church, Port Gibson	2454.07	235	Moak's Creek Baptist Church, Summit	1440.20
120	Providence, Hattiesburg	2421.00	236	Prentiss Baptist Church, Prentiss	1437.00
121	Edna Baptist Church, Columbia	2330.69	237	Broadmoor Baptist Church, Jackson	1431.96
122	Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson	2304.00	238	New Bethel Baptist Church, Carrollton	1429.94
123	Dockery Baptist Church, Cleveland	2300.00	239	Bethel Baptist Church, Poplarville	1426.50
124	Jericho Baptist Church, Baldwyn	2293.35	240	First Baptist Church, Eudora, Hernando	1411.62
125	D'Lo Baptist Church, D Lo	2286.59	241	Westwood Baptist Church, Meridian	1408.15
126	Woodland Hills Baptist Church, Jackson	2285.25	242	New Prospect Baptist Church, Iuka	1404.94
127	Noxapater Baptist Church, Noxapater	2276.62	243	First Baptist Church, Biloxi	1404.00
128	First Baptist Church, Bay St Louis	2254.21	244	West Baptist Church, West	1400.00
129	Anchors Baptist Church, Water Valley	2240.90	245	Taylor Baptist Church, Taylor	1398.33
130	Mount Nebo Baptist Church, Collinsville	2235.31	246	Pine Grove Baptist Church, Picayune	1397.00
131	New Hope Baptist Church, Monticello	2235.00	247	Flora Baptist Church, Flora	1393.42
132	Ephesus Baptist Church, Forest	2225.00	248	Rocky Point Baptist Church, Carthage	1389.37
133	Center Hill Baptist Church, Ecru	2185.22	249	Ramah Baptist Church, Mc Call Creek	1388.00
134	First Baptist Church, Abbeville	2175.76	250	Union Baptist Church, Nettleton	1380.91
135	Plainway Baptist Church, Laurel	2145.00	251	Macdonald Baptist Honduras Mission, Monticello	1375.42
136	Alta Woods Baptist Church, Jackson	2131.94	252	Beacon Street Baptist Church, Philadelphia	1375.00
137	Valley Grove Baptist Church, Tupelo	2117.67	253	Branch Baptist Church, Morton	1374.19
138	Barton Baptist Church, Lucedale	2091.09	254	Shifalo Memorial Baptist Church, Kiln	1371.26
139	Thrasher Baptist Church, Booneville	2087.92	255	Oak Hill Baptist Church, Booneville	1370.00
140	Chunky Baptist Church, Chunky	2068.00	256	Bucatunna Baptist Church, Meridian	1369.07
141	New Harmony Baptist Church, Blue Springs	2060.78	257	Wellman Baptist Church, Bogue Chitto	1366.55
142	Tylertown Baptist Church, Tylertown	2052.50	258	Williamsburg Baptist Church, Collins	1362.66
143	Pinelake Baptist Church, Madison	2047.43	259	Monticello Baptist Church, Monticello	1340.00
144	Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Gulfport	2018.08	260	Leflore Baptist Church, Holcomb	1335.00
145	Beulah Baptist Church, Inverness	2013.42	261	Horseshoe Baptist Church, Tehula	1334.00
146	First Baptist Church, Grenada	2003.00	262	First Baptist Church, Rolling Fork	1327.00
147	North Batesville Baptist Church, Batesville	2000.00	263	Bethel Baptist Church, Liberty	1320.00
148	Zion Hill Baptist Church, Wesson	1988.46	264	Davis Road Baptist Church, Terry	1314.49
149	Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Dumas	1977.00	265	Christ Baptist Church, Greenwood	1314.31
150	Stanton Baptist Church, Natchez	1972.27	266	Tuscola Baptist Church, Lena	1313.13
151	Bethlehem Baptist Church, Walnut	1966.51	267	Oakland Heights Baptist Church, Meridian	1291.68
152	Trinity Baptist Church-Southaven, Southaven	1962.06	268	Heuck's Retreat Baptist Church, Brookhaven	1285.40
153	First Baptist Church, Florence	1960.00	269	First Baptist Church, Rolling Fork	1270.00
154	Sturgis Baptist Church, Sturgis	1954.54	270	Broadway Baptist Church, Olive Branch	1268.00
155	Beulah Baptist Church, Decatur	1938.00	271	Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Tupelo	126

'Radical' St. James a big hit with teens

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Rebecca St. James isn't hesitant to describe herself as a "radical." She's proud of it, but her "in your face" musical style isn't steering teenagers toward drugs, sex or rock 'n roll.

It points them to God.

"I've always had a focus on being very biblical in my

music," the 19-year-old Australian native and current resident of Franklin, Tenn., said in an interview.

"It's very straight ahead, very 'in your face' about what the Bible says about how to live. And God has convicted me to stay that way, to always be challenging and encourag-

ing others to live a radical Christian life."

St. James' direct nature even had an impact on the name of her current album, boldly titled: "God."

Only her second major musical release, it was recently nominated for a Grammy Award for best rock gospel album by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

She wrote eight of the 11 songs on the album, addressing themes such as obedience, servanthood, prayer, and the consequences of sin.

She also was a major player in the Baptist Sunday School Board's newly revamped Vacation Bible School (VBS) materials for youth.

She hosts the "Saddle Up! For the Adventure of Your Life" video, which supports the daily VBS Bible studies.

She also wrote an article for the "Saddle Up!" student newspaper.

"I really appreciated the opportunity to be part of this ministry," St. James, a member of First Church, Franklin, said of the VBS project.

Richard Barnes, manager of the youth biblical studies section of the BSSB's Bible teaching-reaching division, said he was "thrilled to have Rebecca as part of this project. She relates so well to her generation. I know teenagers will be impacted by her involvement."

Barnes said the BSSB expects approximately 160,000 teens to use the new VBS materials for small-group Bible study later this year.

That's good news to St. James, who also has written a best-selling devotional book

aimed at getting teens to "dig into the Bible."

"40 Days With God: A Devotional Journey" topped Bookstore Journal's Christian best-seller's list last year and includes Scripture passages, sections from St. James' personal journal, lyrics from her albums, "scrapbook photos" and an "AudioVision CD" which features three music videos, five songs, and several short interviews.

In concert, she's fond of telling the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were saved from death in the fiery furnace because they refused to bow to idols.

She challenges audiences with a similar vision for her own generation.

"So many are bowing down to false gods — drugs, sex, materialism. But you and I need to be totally sold out to God. We're like this," she exclaims, throwing back her head and raising hands heavenward. "We will not bow."

With her recent award nominations and media exposure — late last year "Christianity Today" named her one of the top 50 evangelical leaders 40 and under — St. James is aware of the temptations which may come her way, but she isn't worried about the pitfalls of fame.

"It's not a scary thing to me. I've had to trust God from the very beginning to even do this. It's in God's hands."

She'll just keep focusing on her No. 1 message to teens:

"The Christian life is the only way to go. To serve God and live for him is the most exciting, most fulfilling adventure anyone can imagine."



SADDLING UP — Richard Barnes (right), manager of the Baptist Sunday School Board's youth biblical studies section, talks with rock gospel singer Rebecca St. James during a party held recently at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville. The event celebrated the release of the "Saddle Up for the Adventure of Your Life" video, part of the 1997 Vacation Bible School materials for youth. St. James hosted the BSSB-produced video. (BP photo by Jim Veneman.)



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ph.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

My 46-year-old friend exploits his parents, and his mother can't take much more. How can he be made more responsible?

His parents and other family members must begin firmly saying "No!" You can speak the truth in love to him. He is probably fearful of being out on his own, which has been reinforced for years by this family system of which he is a member. He may be at a loss to break the cycle, so try to persuade him to seek Christian counseling or at least be accountable for his lifestyle to another Christian like you. Meet with him weekly to find out how he is doing, and encourage personal contact with Godly men who can help him break this cycle. If he refuses all these efforts, there's not much more you can do. Frankly, this is a textbook case for the value of teaching the meaning of "No!" to children at any early age.

I find it hard to believe Jesus saved me just because I asked. How do I know he did or didn't choose to save me? Do I have to wait until I die to find out?

Read John 3:16 this way: "For God so loved (your name) that he gave his only Son, that if (your name) believes in him, (your name) would not die but have everlasting life." What a foundation on which to stand! Humans find it difficult to believe in things that cannot be seen. However, we believe in gravity even though we cannot see it. God can be believed because of his Word and his promises. Like gravity, you may not literally see God with your earthly eyes, but you can believe he is here. Our problem is that we often focus on circumstances instead of God, which is like fretting about the waves crashing around us while standing high above on solid rock.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.

GA/Acteen day at BMC



Registering for the GA/Acteen Day program at Blue Mountain College are (from left) Haley Robinson, 12; Leigh-Taylor Padgett, 12; Janet McCord, assistant leader; and Margie Harris, leader, all from Shiloh Church, Lafayette Association. A total of 317 girls and their leaders participated in the event which concluded with a basketball game between Blue Mountain and David Lipscomb College. (See related story on page six.) Another GA/Acteen Day is set for Feb. 22 at Mississippi College, Clinton. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)